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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the positive value of high-school athletics in the formation of social capital. Social capital is described as the resources available to actors that result from their interaction within a social network. Athletics provide many opportunities for parent-to-parent and parent-to-school personal interactions that have the potential of benefiting all within the school community. To secure data for this study, a multiple case-study approach was chosen. Three schools--one Catholic, one religious non-Catholic school, and one public school, all of which were relatively close in proximity--were selected for the study. Multiple sources of data were utilized, including school documents, interviews with key informants, faculty interviews or focus groups, parent surveys, aggregate student-achievement scores, and observer notes. The interview data from all three schools indicated that the sports programs were important in bringing parents onto campus for an event in which they could interact. This interaction is often face-to-face, sustained, and frequent enough (sports fund raisers, sports banquets, sports events) to allow for the formation of social capital. The social capital thus generated by this interaction becomes a valuable resource for all within the school community. (RJM)

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An Overlooked Role of High School Athletics: The Formation of Social Capital through Parent Involvement

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the positive value of high school athletics in the formation of social capital. This role for high school athletics has often been overlooked as the focus of much of the research has been on the impact athletic participation has on the individual. Little attention has been given to the role high school athletics contributes to the building and sustaining of social capital within school communities.

Social capital as used in this paper refers to the resources available to actors that result from their interaction within a social network (Coleman, 1988). These resources are common in communities where people know each other, trust each other, exchange information, and enforce the community norms.

What this research has found is that the athletic program of the school is a significant mechanism for the formation of social capital in the community in which the school is embedded. As such, its benefits extend beyond that of the individual to that of establishing and strengthening the social networks within the school community. Whether the school is large or small, public or private, athletic activities provide many opportunities for parent-to-parent and parent-to-school personnel interaction which has the potential of benefiting all within the school community.

Individual Benefits of Athletic Participation

Driven by tightened school budgets and a public perception for greater accountability, educators and the public have critically examined the extra curricular programs of secondary schools (Holland & Andre, 1987). This is especially true of sports activities, as some see the role of the school as purely academic, and so those holding a "back to basics" philosophy view athletics as suspect at best (Smith, 1994). This critical examination of the role of high school athletics has spurred much research in this area.

Although there are those who would argue that non-academic activities distract students from more important academic pursuits, others have found that these activities are beneficial to the academics, but in an indirect manner (Gerber, 1996).

Utilizing the High School and Beyond national data base, Marsh (1992) investigated whether or not extra-curricular activities detracted from student academic pursuits. He found a small but consistently positive effect which led him to conclude that... "participation in extracurricular activities - even those not obviously associated with academic achievement - apparently leads to increased commitment to school and school values, which leads indirectly to increased academic success (Marsh, 1992, 553-562).

Taking a more direct approach was Gerber (1996) who used the National Educational Longitudinal Study:88 data base to investigate the relationship between extracurricular activities and academic achievement. She found that increased participation in extracurricular activities was found to be positively related to academic achievement. Furthermore, she found "...that participation in school-related activities was

more strongly associated with achievement that was participation in activities outside of school" (Gerber, 1996, 48).

Also using the High School and Beyond data base, McNeal (1995) studied extracurricular activities and drop-out rates. He found that participation in school athletics reduced the likelihood of a student dropping out of school, whereas participation in academic and vocational extracurricular activities did not.

In an extensive literature review relating extracurricular participation to adolescent development, Holland & Andre (1987) found much value in extracurricular participation. They found that among other factors, participation in extracurricular activities was positively correlated with higher levels of self esteem, academic ability, higher grades in males, and lower delinquency rates.

Little was found in the literature that looked at benefits beyond that of the individual. However, Holland & Andre (1987) reported that small rural communities seemed to place great value on their high school athletic teams. High school athletic competition for these small rural schools became a major social activity which, in that regard, benefited the entire community. What is not found in the literature is the benefit to the school and community that accrues from the formation of social capital due to the interaction of parents in support of high school athletics.

Perspective

The theoretical framework for this paper comes from the concept of social capital as defined by James S. Coleman (1988). He described social capital as a resource available to actors that results from their interaction within a social network. Social

capital exists in several forms such as trust, information sharing, and norms with effective sanctions. Social capital is not the possession of a particular individual, but instead exists in the relations between people and is diminished when individuals withdraw from social networks. Social capital can exist in a social network as small as a family or as large as a community.

Social capital can be used by the individual who is part of a social network when needed, but it is not thought to be the possession of an individual as might be true of economic or human capital. Economic capital refers to the wealth of an individual and there are usually records kept that would attest to its quantity and ownership. Human capital is the knowledge and skills acquired by an individual. Although human capital is somewhat less tangible than economic capital, there are often records and credentials that would attest to the experience and education of an individual.

All three types of capital are important to the educational process as they can be converted from one to another to some extent. Parents can utilize their economic capital to provide learning resources and proper schools to help ensure that their children increase in human capital through the process of education. And to some extent, even the human capital of the parents can be transferred to their children if there is sufficient social capital, that is, if the parents are physically present in the family and are able to give their time and attention to their children. Social capital has been found to be weaker in families where only one adult is present or where the relations between the parent and child(ren) are not strong (Teachman, Paasch & Carver, 1996, 1997).

Although social capital exists in varying degrees within families, it also develops in some communities. This is especially true of what Coleman and Hoffer (1987) describe as

a functional community. They described a functional community as "...a community in which social norms and sanctions, including those that cross generations, arise out of the social structure itself, and both reinforce and perpetuate that structure" (p. 7). In this type of community, there is "closure" between the adult communities and the communities of youth in that parents know the parents of their children's friends. And it is this intergenerational contact which enforces the norms established by the adult community. It is as its name implies, a functioning community. Functional communities were typical in most neighborhoods of the past, but now are primarily found in rural areas or in ethnic neighborhoods of urban areas.

Public schools of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries could often be characterized as embedded in a functional community. The family, community, and society held to and reinforced dominant religions and cultural orientations. However in time, technological and structural changes have greatly weakened these communities. The separation of residence and work has removed adults from local community interaction. Community interaction has been replaced by individuals joining special interest groups. Increases in affluence have reduced the interdependency of families (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987).

According to Coleman and Hoffer (1987), the current public school populated with students based upon residence retains little of the character of a functional community. This may be to its detriment. In their study of a comparison of public and private schools, Coleman and Hoffer (1987) found that the private schools had higher verbal and math achievement. They theorized that the religiously-sponsored private schools were situated in functional communities and that it was this social capital which

was not as abundant in the public schools that contributed to the higher achievement they found in the religiously-sponsored private schools. They posited that it was more probable that parents who knew each other from weekly interaction at church and school were more likely to trust each other, share information, and to enforce their commonly held values.

However plausible all of this may sound, little empirical evidence was cited by Coleman and Hoffer (1987) to support this theory. Furthermore, Coleman and Hoffer gave little indication what the actual mechanisms may be that work to create the social capital found in schools. The purpose of the research presented in this paper was to determine the mechanisms of social capital formation and maintenance in schools. What was found was that high school athletics was a major mechanism for the formation of social capital in schools.

Methodology

The research that forms the empirical basis for this paper is part of a larger qualitative exploratory study that seeks to gain an understanding of the organizational processes and structures that contribute to the formation and maintenance of social capital within the school community. A qualitative method was selected as it was thought to be more useful than quantitative methods in revealing the factors that contribute to a phenomena about which little is known (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

A multiple case study approach was chosen as it provided several contexts in which to observe the phenomena that, according to Yin (1988), would increase the strength of the study over a single case study. This approach also facilitated using

different types of schools so that the structures and processes common to several types of schools could be distinguished from those unique to a particular school.

The school sites selected for this study were relatively close in proximity in order to help control for social capital produced within community-wide structures, independent of the schools. They also were selected in order to provide contrasting types. A Catholic school and a non-Catholic religious school were chosen, as theory predicted they both should possess structure and processes that should produce social capital. A large public school was chosen for contrast, making it a theoretical replication (Yin, 1988). Furthermore, the use of private versus public, religious versus non-religious, Catholic versus non-Catholic, and large versus small distinctions assisted in teasing out those structures and processes common to social capital production from those that are particular to a specific type of school, size, or ideology.

Data

Multiple sources of data were utilized including school documents, interviews with key informants (principal, principal's secretary, active parents), faculty interviews or focus groups, parent surveys and focus groups, aggregate student achievement scores, and observer notes. Documents included parent-student handbooks, registration materials, school newsletters, parent organization minutes, school and sports calendars, and aggregate achievement data. The parent survey was administered to all parents in schools of less than 300 families and to a random sample of 300 in schools greater than 300 families. Observer notes were made by the researcher at several activities that involved parents, including sports events, booster club meetings, and back-to-school nights.

For analysis, this data was sorted into categories representing the major forms of social capital: trust, information sharing, norms and sanctions. Within each category, the characteristics of the relevant social network were recorded for each structure and process contributing to that form of social capital.

One of the difficulties in dealing with social capital is that due to its intangible nature, it is difficult to measure. Unlike economic capital, no records are kept of who "owns" what, and unlike human capital, there are no credentials that give evidence of education achieved or experience gained. Therefore, proxies were chosen to approximate the variables discussed.

Since social capital formation in schools is dependent upon parent face-to-face interaction with other parents and with school personnel, lists of "Opportunities for Parent Interaction" were compiled for each school. These "Opportunities for Parent Interaction" were taken to be the mechanisms for social capital formation. Although each "opportunity" allowed for interaction, they varied greatly by design in their ability to build social capital. Some were information meetings or performances that allowed for interaction only before and after the event, but others, such as volunteer work, allowed for parents to interact closely for long periods of time.

In a similar manner, the percent of parents who volunteered their time at school was taken as a proxy for the relative amount of social capital. This is an appropriate proxy as it potentially includes all three forms of social capital: obligations, expectations, trust; shared information; effective norms. The parents who are volunteering are acting out of obligation or expectation. Furthermore, in performing the tasks, they often have

opportunity to share information with each other or school personnel and will also need to operate within accepted school norms and enforce those norms as required by the task.

Individual Case Findings

Each school is described separately utilizing the same general framework in order to facilitate later cross-case analysis. This framework includes a brief description of each school, its mission statement, the students, the parents, the faculty, a list of opportunities for parent interaction, and description of the social network and community in which the school is embedded. The specific components of this framework together provide for each case a context for understanding the mechanisms that produce social capital and the nature of the social networks in which it is found.

ST. MARK'S

St. Mark's is a Catholic school located in a quiet residential neighborhood a few blocks from the nearest freeway. Most of the pale yellow buildings sit on one corner of its 27-acre campus. Its facilities seem adequate, but most buildings appear to have been built in the 50's or 60's and could use some paint and other maintenance. Although it currently is coed, it was built originally in the early 1950's as an all-boys school, but later merged with an all-girls school. It is accredited for a full term through the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, and the Western Catholic Education Association.

Mission Statement

As described in its admissions brochure, St. Mark's is a coeducational Catholic school available to all students within the diocese. The ministerial model of Jesus Christ is the philosophical basis for outreach and interaction at St. Mark's. Developing and

exercising respect and concern for others is the main thrust of this Christian community. St. Mark's aims to educate through an experience that incorporates all aspects of a student's development. (It should be noted that this mission statement was undergoing revisions during the time of this study.)

Students

According to the principal, St. Mark's is a growing school of 324 students. Most of the students (84% to 86%) were reported to be Catholic, were primarily from active Catholic homes and came to St. Mark's from other Catholic feeder schools. A comparison of a Chamber of Commerce demographic report with the results of a self-reported survey indicated that the school differed somewhat from its community in that some groups were underreported and others were overreported. The school survey revealed 55% Caucasian, 34% Mexican-American or Hispanic, 4% African-American, 4% Asian and 3% other. The demographic report indicated a community that was 59% Caucasian including those of Hispanic origin, 14% African-American, 6% Asian, and 21% other. Most students (77%) lived 5 or more miles from the school.

According to the Parent-Student Handbook, students at St. Mark's were expected to behave in a Christian manner reflecting their Catholic faith and Christian morals. They also were expected to study, as there were eight AP classes and over 90% of the graduates were reported to go on to college each year.

Parents

As determined from the parent survey, most of the parents who sent their children to St. Mark's were married (77%), owned their own home (90%), had at least some college (92%), and earned more than $45,000 a year (70%). Furthermore, 85% spent

some time volunteering at school, and 74% knew more than five other families in the school.

Faculty

There were twenty-two on the faculty roster, and they were equally divided male and female. The faculty all seemed well qualified, as they all had bachelors degrees, several had masters degrees, and a few had begun doctoral programs. Most participated in a special faculty mass held as part of faculty orientation, so it was assumed that most were Catholic. Most indicated in interviews that they lived within 10 miles of campus, although one traveled over an hour each day to reach St. Mark's.

Opportunities for Parent Interaction

1. School board member
2. Booster club (sports)
3. Book sale
4. Class reunion (many parents had attended St. Mark's)
5. Sports
6. Opening family liturgy and picnic
7. New parent orientation
8. Liturgy on campus
9. Freshman retreat
10. Grandparents day
11. Feeder school leadership day
12. Back-to-school night
13. Sports banquets
14. Monte Carlo night party (for parents)
15. Financial aid night
16. Campus clean up days (6)
17. State of the school assembly
18. School play
19. Parent-teacher conference
20. Parents picking up their children
21. Fund raising dinner
22. Academic decathlon
23. Science fair
24. Chaperone field trips
25. Volunteer workers

26. Golf tournament
27. School committees
28. Fund raising events
29. Kairos retreat

Social Networks

The strongest and most effective social networks came from the sports program. Sports activities attracted the largest groups of parents to the school on several occasions. Whether it was a football or basketball game, or a sports award banquet, large numbers of parents were seen on campus. The sports booster club was observed to be the largest, most active, and most effective parent group on campus. The school board and board committees were also drawn from the parents, and they held an important but advisory role to the principal.

St. Mark's had developed a strong relationship with several "feeder" parish schools. Parents and students who came from each of these schools already knew each other and were part of an established social network due to their involvement with their parish church and school. The challenge, then, for St. Mark's was to integrate these units together into one, and the school provided several opportunities for parents to meet other parents and become part of the new, larger school-wide social networks. The first big push in this direction was the freshman retreat. As part of that activity, over 50 parents of freshmen were asked to lead a "parents' discussion" with a group of freshmen they did not know. This activity gave students an opportunity to get to know the students who came from the other parish schools as well as a few parents they had not known before.

There were several activities of a spiritual nature designed to unite the school families together spiritually. For the most part, these activities were observed to be poorly attended.

Athletics

Fall:

Football (co-ed) *	Volleyball (girls)
Cross Country (co-ed)	Tennis (girls)
Wrestling (boys & girls)	Cheerleading (girls)

* It was listed as co-ed, but no girls were actually on the team

Winter:

Basketball (boys & girls)	Cheerleading (girls)
Soccer (boys & girls)	

Spring:

Baseball (boys)	Softball (girls)
Track & field (co-ed)	Tennis (boys & girls)
Golf (co-ed)	Cheerleading (girls)

Sports Booster Club

The most active parent organization at St. Mark's was the Sports Booster Club. This organization was responsible for not only raising enough money to run the sports program, but it was also required by the school to raise enough money to pay the coaches' stipends. This all totaled approximately $150,000 for the current year. To help raise this amount of money, parents were required to volunteer 10 hours per sport per student to help the Sports Booster Club in its fundraising activities.

GREEN VALLEY

Green Valley is a brand new public school, in only its second year of existence. It is located at the intersection of industrial, agricultural, and residential areas. There are 228,000 square feet of permanent buildings, and 33,000 square feet of portable building space located on a 58-acre site. The forty-plus million dollar campus boasts a state-of-the-art library/media center, 100 teaching stations, each featuring a "learning wall", televisions are in every classroom, linked by fiber optics, and each classroom has at least one computer linked to the Internet.

Mission Statement

As taken from their web site, "The mission of Green Valley High School is to create a nurturing and academically challenging environment, to educate our culturally diverse student population, and to prepare them to make positive life choices in a global society."

Students

Although Green Valley was only in its second year of operation, its current enrollment of 2,800 students exceeded its designed maximum of 2,600, and so portable classrooms were utilized. The students came from several communities, with some coming from up to 10 miles away. No ethnic make up of the school was found in any school document, but it was assumed that it would be close to that of the dominant geographical community. According to the Green Valley Chamber of Commerce, the city was 80% Caucasian, 19% Hispanic, 3% African-American, 4% Asian, and 11% other. Almost half of the students (47%) lived less than 5 miles from the school.

Parents

According to the parent survey, most of the Green Valley High School parents were married (83%), owned their own home (81%), had at least some college (84%), and most earned more than $45,000 a year (68%). Furthermore, 59% did not spend any time volunteering on campus, 25% spent one to ten hours a year volunteering, and 16% spent more than ten hours a year volunteering on campus. As the city of Green Valley was noted for the strength of its community, it was not surprising to find that 54% of the parents knew six or more families in the school.

Faculty

There were 120 certificated staff members at Green Valley High School. It was learned in the faculty interviews that the Green Valley Unified School District is considered quite prestigious, as it is very selective and pays higher than average salaries. Furthermore, most of the faculty were not new to the district, as they transferred to Green Valley from other high schools in the district. This transfer included many who were very experienced teachers and even several who were department heads. It was also determined from interview data that the vast majority of the faculty lived in the city of Green Valley. Some of the faculty had not only grown up in the community, but had attended Green Valley schools up to and including college.

Opportunities for parent interaction

1. Parent conferences
2. Back-to-school night
3. Parent teacher student association
4. Site council meeting
5. Sports events
6. Booster club meeting
7. Sports award banquets

8. Parent university (District event held at GVHS)
9. Booster fundraising dinner
10. Fall crafts show
11. GVHS parents night presented by the sheriff's department
12. Speech competition
13. Sports breakfast
14. IEPs (Individual Education Plans)
15. Teacher appreciation day

Social networks

Green Valley High School owes its very existence to its community of parents. Although the community's only other high school was severely impacted for many years, several district attempts at bond issues to build a new campus failed. It wasn't until a parents' committee was organized, paid for advertising, walked the neighborhoods and worked phone banks that the drive for another bond issue passed, enabling GVHS to be built. Some of the leadership of that parents' committee remains active in the GVHS parent organization, but most of the social network that had formed to pass the bond issue was lost before the school opened.

Although most students who attended Green Valley High School came from the City of Green Valley, the school's boundaries included several growing, unincorporated communities up to ten miles away. The mayor of Green Valley noted in an interview that he suspects that in the future, as the unincorporated areas grow and send even more students to Green Valley High School, it will eventually lose its strong ties with the city of Green Valley.

The parents' organization had a strong board and boasted 600 paid memberships. However, its monthly meetings were observed to be attended mostly by its own board members and a few other parents.

The sports program created the largest and most sustained opportunity for parent interaction. As a large high school, there were over 50 sports teams playing during each season. Parents attended not only the games, but also the booster clubs, fund raising dinners, and sports award functions.

In addition, there were a few performing arts booster clubs that gave parents an opportunity to support their students' participation in the performing arts programs as well.

Athletics

Fall:

Football	Tennis (girls)
Cross Country	Volleyball (girls)
Water polo (boys)	

Winter:

Basketball (boys & girls)	Wrestling
Soccer (boys & girls)	Water polo (girls)

Spring:

Baseball	Softball
Badminton	Swimming
Golf	Tennis (boys)
Track & field	Volleyball (boys)

Year-round sports:

Cheerleading	Songleading	Mascot

Sports Booster Clubs

Green Valley High School had several booster clubs that supported the major sports offered at the school. Each booster club had its own set of officers and functioned independently of the others in supporting their particular sport through fund raisers.

LAS COLINAS ACADEMY

Nestled against the foothills of a major mountain range, Las Colinas Seventh-Day Adventist Academy is situated on approximately 25 acres. Most of its buildings were built in the late 1970's and were all well maintained. Las Colinas is a K-12 school with separate buildings to house grades K-8 and the high school grades 9-12. There is also a large gym and a large technology building that could accommodate architecture, automotive technology, photography, and wood working. Las Colinas is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges as well as the Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists.

Mission

According to its Parent-Student Handbook, Seventh-Day Adventists believe that a knowledge of God, communion with him, and emulation of his character are of paramount importance; only in cooperation with God can the individual, in the quest for knowledge, reach the optimum development of mental, physical, and spiritual powers.

Las Colinas endeavors to provide a Christian-related education that will transmit American culture, academic excellence, and also the heritage that is singularly Seventh-Day Adventist.

Students

Most of the 328 K-12 (134 high school) students at Las Colinas came from the nearest Seventh-Day Adventist churches. However, several of the students had commutes of up to an hour to reach the school. According to the principal, several other students attended Las Colinas even though they lived close to another Seventh-Day Adventist school, because Las Colinas was smaller. No school data was available regarding the ethnic makeup of the student body. However, it was observed that most students were Caucasian, although ethnic diversity was seen throughout the campus.

Parents

According to the parent survey, most of the Las Colinas parents were married (95%), owned their own home (86%), had at least some college (96%) (including 35% who attended graduate school), and most earned more than $45,000 a year (85%).

Furthermore, 82% of the parents spent some time volunteering on campus and 77% of the families knew more than five other families at the school. In fact, 36% of the families reported knowing more than twenty other school families.

Since Las Colinas was a Seventh-Day Adventist school, most parents as determined in interviews, were Seventh-Day Adventists, and attended one of the three major Seventh-Day Adventist churches in the communities surrounding the school.

Faculty

The elementary faculty consisted of seven teachers with one for each grade K-6. All but one of the elementary staff were female. Most had taught six or more years, but at different schools.

The two junior high teachers offered contrast with each other in that the female had taught for over six years (three of them at Las Colinas), and the male teacher had taught for over twenty years with about half of them at Las Colinas.

The high school staff consisted of nine teachers, four males and five females. About half the staff had been there two years or less, and the other half had been there for six or more years. There was some cross over among the junior and senior high school teachers as well. The music teacher and the computer teacher served both the elementary and secondary divisions.

The interviews determined that most of the staff lived in the general area of the school, and all attended nearby Seventh-Day Adventist churches. Some were more active than others in their churches, as some wished to keep a lower profile, especially with the youth they served on a daily basis.

Opportunities for parent interaction

1. Sports events
2. Parent teacher association meetings
3. Grandparents day
4. Fund raising activities
5. Choir festival
6. Drama programs
7. Home and school nights
8. Parent teacher conferences
9. Teacher appreciation day
10. Spring concert
11. Christmas program
12. Awards reception
13. Graduation and baccalaureate
14. Senior parents meeting (November)
15. School fair
16. Missions trip
17. College financial aid workshop
18. Back-to-school night
19. Education day (at various churches)

20. Parent volunteers
21. Driving to field trips
22. International mission outreach
23. Room mothers (elementary)
24. Santa's workshop (elementary)
25. Selling Scrip
26. Parties (elementary)
27. Parents picking up their children

Social networks

The biggest social network for the parents of the school was that formed by the church. People knew each other from their regular attendance at church and church activities. The faculty, administration, and most of the parents worshipped together as members of the three supporting churches. The influence of the largest and closest church was felt the most. Even parents who attended the other supporting churches (not the largest), seemed to know each other, having gone to the Seventh-Day Adventist University together, or they may have worked together at a Seventh-Day Adventist institution. The church and school were closely tied together, and interview participants explained that it was sometimes difficult to determine if an activity was a church activity or a school activity, since the young people were the same for each activity and because each institution freely used the other's campus, personnel, and/or vehicles.

School parents knew many of the other parents. This created an unusual situation in that the school parent organization appeared weak as few parents were reported to attend meetings. However, when something needed to get done, a few telephone calls were made and the parent volunteers were there.

Athletics

Volleyball (boys & girls) Basketball (boys & girls)

Softball Baseball

Sports Booster Club

As there was not an extensive athletic program at Las Colinas, there was not a sports booster club. However, parents attended the games and were observed to be supportive of the sports that were offered. The Home and School parent organization did sponsor a monthly gym night for families, but it did not serve the same purpose as an athletic program.

Cross-case findings

One of the most dramatic indications of the importance of high school athletic programs in providing the opportunity for the formation of social capital was from the interview data collected from each school. It did not matter which school, or whether it was the principal, his secretary, a member of the faculty, or a parent, the nearly universal first response to the question, "What are the programs, policies, and practices that bring parents on campus?" was, "sports". It seemed that everyone associated with the school recognized the ability of the high school sports program to bring parents on campus.

In the two schools included in this study that had sports booster clubs, it was found that the sports booster clubs were the most active parent organizations. Though both St. Mark's and Green Valley High School had a general parents' organization, the sports booster clubs at each school had more parents come to meetings and actually get involved. Green Valley's PTSA boasted a paid membership of 600, but in reality, rarely more than 20 members were observed to attend meetings, and by far, the majority of these were PTSA officers.

Some selected questions from the parent survey that was administered at each school also provided supportive data.

1. **How likely is it for you to meet other school parents at a school sporting event?**

	Very likely	Likely	Not likely	Never
St. Mark's	74%	10%	4%	12%
Green Valley	36%	28%	21%	16%
Las Colinas	45%	45%	20%	11%

2. **How likely is it that you would talk about the school with other parents at a school sporting event**

	Very likely	Likely	Not likely	Never
St. Mark's	62%	29%	3%	6%
Green Valley	39%	37%	14%	11%
Las Colinas	32%	46%	11%	12%

3. **How likely is it for you to meet other school parents at community sporting events?**

	Very likely	Likely	Not likely	Never
St. Mark's	18%	34%	28%	20%
Green Valley	18%	22%	40%	20%
Las Colinas	4%	11%	37%	48%

4. **How likely is it that you would talk about the school with other parents at a community sports event?**

	Very likely	Likely	Not likely	Never
St. Mark's	26%	42%	23%	9%
Green Valley	22%	31%	35%	13%
Las Colinas	9%	9%	33%	48%

5. **How likely is it that you would meet at a school booster or other club meeting?**

	Very likely	Likely	Not likely	Never
St. Mark's	50%	27%	9%	14%
Green Valley	29%	27%	23%	21%
Las Colinas	18%	33%	27%	22%

6. **How likely is it that you would talk about the school at a booster or other club meeting?**

	Very likely	Likely	Not likely	Never
St. Mark's	55%	30%	5%	11%
Green Valley	39%	23%	25%	13%
Las Colinas	22%	39%	24%	15%

7. **How likely is it that you would meet at a school performance?**

	Very likely	Likely	Not likely	Never
St. Mark's	58%	25%	11%	6%
Green Valley	30%	38%	23%	9%
Las Colinas	68%	28%	4%	0%

8. **How likely is it that you would talk about the school at a school performance?**

	Very likely	Likely	Not likely	Never
St. Mark's	45%	42%	9%	5%
Green Valley	34%	41%	18%	7%
Las Colinas	51%	42%	7%	0%

9. **School sports events give parents opportunity to share common concerns.**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
St. Mark's	32%	54%	13%	0%
Green Valley	19%	55%	22%	3%
Las Colinas	14%	61%	21%	4%

10. **Parents often see other school parents outside of school and school activities.**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
St. Mark's	5%	58%	35%	3%
Green Valley	4%	62%	33%	2%
Las Colinas	9%	69%	18%	4%

Discussion

The interview data from all three schools indicated that the high school sports programs were important to bringing parents on campus at an event in which they could interact. This is also seen in question 1 of the parent survey as the vast majority (64-90%)

of parents reported that they were very likely or likely to meet other school parents at school sporting events.

Parents talking to other parents at a sporting event would provide a strong indication that parents do interact at sporting events in a way that would facilitate the formation of social capital. The results from question 2 of the parent survey indicate that the majority of parents (76-91%) recognized that they were very likely or likely to talk about the school at a sporting event.

School performances also fared well in their ability to create an opportunity for parent interaction. According to question 7, 68-96% of the parents were very likely or likely to meet other parents at a school performance. And according to question 8, 73-93% of the parents were very likely or likely to talk with other parents about the school while attending a school performance. This indicates that both sports events and school performances provide a good opportunity for parent interaction. However, in the schools studied, there were many more varsity sports events than school performances.

The parent responses to questions 3 and 4 indicate that parents were less likely to meet other school parents at community sports events and talk to them about school than at school athletic events. Thus, it was not just a sports event, but a school sports event that was more likely to contribute to social capital formation in the school community.

Questions 5 and 6 of the parent survey indicate the potential for meeting and talking about the school at a booster or other club meeting. The parent responses indicate that 51-77% of the parents were very likely or likely to be involved in a parent on campus organization and that 61-85% of the parents used these meetings to discuss the school.

Conclusions

There is empirical evidence from several sources that athletic activities provide an opportunity for the type of parent interaction that is conducive to the formation of social capital. Furthermore, as sports events, sports banquets, sports fund raisers, and sports booster meetings occur frequently throughout the school year, it can be seen that the sports related activities provide more opportunities for social capital formation than any other school activity.

Though there is a body of literature that discusses the value of the sports program to a high school, little is said regarding the importance of sports activities in providing an opportunity for parent interaction. However, this parent interaction is often face-to-face, sustained, and frequent enough to allow for the formation of social capital. The social capital formed by this interaction then becomes a valuable resource for all within the school community. Thus, there is a benefit to the collective for participation in sports that is rarely mentioned in the literature.

It is hoped that as school parents, policymakers, and leaders recognize the importance of the sports program to the production of social capital, they will seek ways to tap this resource that will benefit all within the school community.

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